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Letter dated 17 November 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Cyprus to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government and further to my letter dated 9 October 2003 (A/58/429-S/2003/982), I have the honour to bring to your attention additional information concerning the persecution of the press by Turkish forces in the occupied part of Cyprus, which reveals the Turkish military's involvement in the daily lives of Turkish Cypriots and its efforts to curb the will of the Turkish Cypriot community.

The issue of oppression of the press in the occupied area has, on many occasions, been raised in our letters to you, and particular concern was expressed about the attacks against the Turkish Cypriot daily *Afrika* and its reporters. The courage to challenge with their pens the policies of Ankara and Mr. Denktash on the Cyprus problem is the one and only crime of those persecuted by the Turkish Army and the occupying regime in Cyprus. Protestations and representations against this unacceptable policy, which violates the fundamental freedoms and liberties of Turkish Cypriots, continue to be made from many quarters around the world as well as by many prestigious international press associations and human rights defenders.

Unfortunately, instead of listening to the increasing calls by Turkish Cypriots for a peaceful settlement of the Cyprus problem and for reunification, Turkey and the illegal regime have escalated their policy of intimidation and harassment against the Turkish Cypriot press. It is evident that acts of persecution of the press have recently increased in the light of the massive demonstrations by Turkish Cypriots demanding a change in the anachronistic policy of Turkey in Cyprus, and because of the increasing number of editorials and articles criticizing Turkey and Mr. Denktash for their irrational and divisive policies with regard to the solution of the problem and accession to the European Union.

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As it was reported in the Turkish Cypriot press, upon complaint by the Turkish Army, a "persecution operation" was launched in occupied Cyprus (*Cyprus Alternative News* at www.hamamboculeri.com) against journalists and editors. The following cases of journalists against whom charges were filed on 3 and 4 November 2003 are indicative of the above-mentioned situation:

(a) On 3 November 2003, a case was brought against Basaran Duzgun, Editor of the daily newspaper, *KIBRIS*, about an article he wrote entitled "Whose guarantor" (*Kimin Garantoru*) published on 27 March 2003. Charges were filed against him for "insulting and undermining the abstract personality of Security Forces Commandership" and the so-called "prosecutor" called for 10 years' imprisonment. Mr. Duzgun is to be tried in military court;

(b) On 3 November 2003, a case was brought against Hasan Hasturer, a columnist at *KIBRIS*, about an article he wrote on 26 March 2003. Hasan Hasturer will be tried for "creating hatred against the state with destructive intent and undermining the state as well as undermining, insulting and creating hatred against officers of Turkey". The illegal regime is asking for a total of 11 years' imprisonment;

(c) On 4 November 2003, a case was brought against Suleyman Erguclu, General Editor of *KIBRIS*, for publishing those articles;

(d) On 4 November 2003, a case was brought against Hasan Kahvecioglu, a columnist at the daily newspaper, *ORTAM*, about an article he had written. Mr. Kahvecioglu is being accused of "insulting the abstract personality of Security Forces Commandership". The "prosecutor" asked for 11 years in jail and Mr. Kahvecioglu will be tried in military court;

(e) On 4 November 2003, a case was brought against Mehmet Davulcu, General Editor of *ORTAM*, for being the person responsible for the newspaper that published the above-mentioned article.

In view of the above-mentioned oppressive policy by the Turkish occupation forces and the illegal regime in the occupied area of Cyprus, we appeal to you, as the leader of an organization that places protection of human rights at the centre of its agenda, to impress upon the Turkish Government the need to terminate the persecution of the press and respect the fundamental right of freedom of speech of the Turkish Cypriot community.

It would be very much appreciated if the text of the present letter could be circulated as a document of the Security Council and of the General Assembly, under agenda item 117 (a) and (b).

(*Signed*) Andreas D. **Mavroyiannis**